

# PENNSYLVANIA MEN WIN PRAISE

Graphic Story of Their Brilliant Work in Clearing Argonne Forest.

NEW YORKERS IN IT TOO

Major Vail, With Men in Shell Hole, Mows Down Enemy Like Wheat.

By RAYMOND G. CARROLL.  
Special Cable Despatch to The Sun and the Public Ledger.

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WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY IN FRANCE, Oct. 12.—Major Gen. Hunter Liggett, commanding the First Corps of the American First Army, has officially commended the (deleted) division for its work in emptying the Argonne forest of Germans. This forest, which actually was a leafy fortress, heretofore was considered impregnable.

New York troops were at the left of the Pennsylvania line, but it was the latter who drove northward in two columns through the beautiful Aire Valley, rich in its autumnal splendor, suddenly veering westward to capture the high points commanding the entire northern tip of the forest.

One column of Pennsylvania troops followed the winding course of the river while the other, having taken the latter for the forest, double flanked being maintained constantly, first by intervening patrols and second by telephone communication, the latter presided over by the chief of the divisional staff, Col. Walter C. Sweeney. The V shaped circuit of communication was not once broken, owing to the alertness and ability of the divisional staff officer, Lieut. Col. Sidney A. Hagler of Pittsburgh.

Signal Men Are Modest.

Each brigade general always knew how far the other had advanced, which greatly facilitated their work and contributed to the success of the whole enterprise. Both signal officers modestly declined credit, saying the success of the undertaking was due to the unflinching bravery of the troops and the excellent handling of the artillery and to the magnificent team work between officers and men.

Realizing the materiality of this drive I made repeated trips up the valley of the Aire during the operation, witnessing the physical results piling up behind our progressing troops. These include nine German 77s, one of which was put into action against the enemy the day it was captured, the success of which later, three 150s, also usable; three German naval guns, an entire narrow gauge railway in perfect condition, with seven locomotives and 243 railway cars; twelve mine throwers, one 3.5 Belgian gun and a complete sawmill, which we are already using to cut lumber for our bridges.

In addition we captured a complete hospital, with all tools and instruments, and many beds, the hospital being immediately occupied by American surgeons and put into use by them; immense quantities of engineering and quartermaster's stores, including clothing and blankets, which were at once humanely distributed among some 500 shivering German prisoners; a carbonizing plant and a complete quarry, with tools for crushing and handling stone.

It is impossible to give the number of machine guns and rifles captured. One company got enough machine guns to equip every one of its men and already has fired off 55,000 rounds of captured ammunition. Only a small part of the German property taken has as yet been salvaged.

The fighting has been extremely intense, there being in many instances hand to hand encounters. The German resistance was savage, picked men having been assigned to hold back the Americans, a task which those who are still living say is impossible.

In ten days of battering the German positions three Pennsylvanians have again covered themselves with glory. Major Robert M. Vail of Scranton, commanding a battalion of machine guns, told of the fight near Apremont. He said he had planned to attack north of the village at 5 o'clock in the morning.

Moved Down Like Wheat.  
Instead of building a trench system around the village he decided upon a series of strong positions within shell holes. Major Vail with four guns, was in such a position about 500 yards from the village. All was set for the attack, both there and at other strong points, where 100 of our men awaited an artillery barrage and word to dash for the enemy.

"It so happened," said Major Vail, "that the Germans had been planning to attack us in exactly the same way we had it in mind to attack them. Just as we were getting ready to attack we were astounded to see the Germans rise out of the ground in front and come dashing toward us. Imagine it! Our machine guns, all placed, all loaded, all ready for instant action, with an eager American back of every one, his finger ready to press the lever. It was pitiable."

"When the Germans got close enough I gave the signal and our boys let them have it. Streams of lead poured into them, mowing them down like wheat. So numerous were the Germans that some of them got up to and beyond our positions, especially on the flanks, but these were immediately met by our infantry behind and not a German escaped."

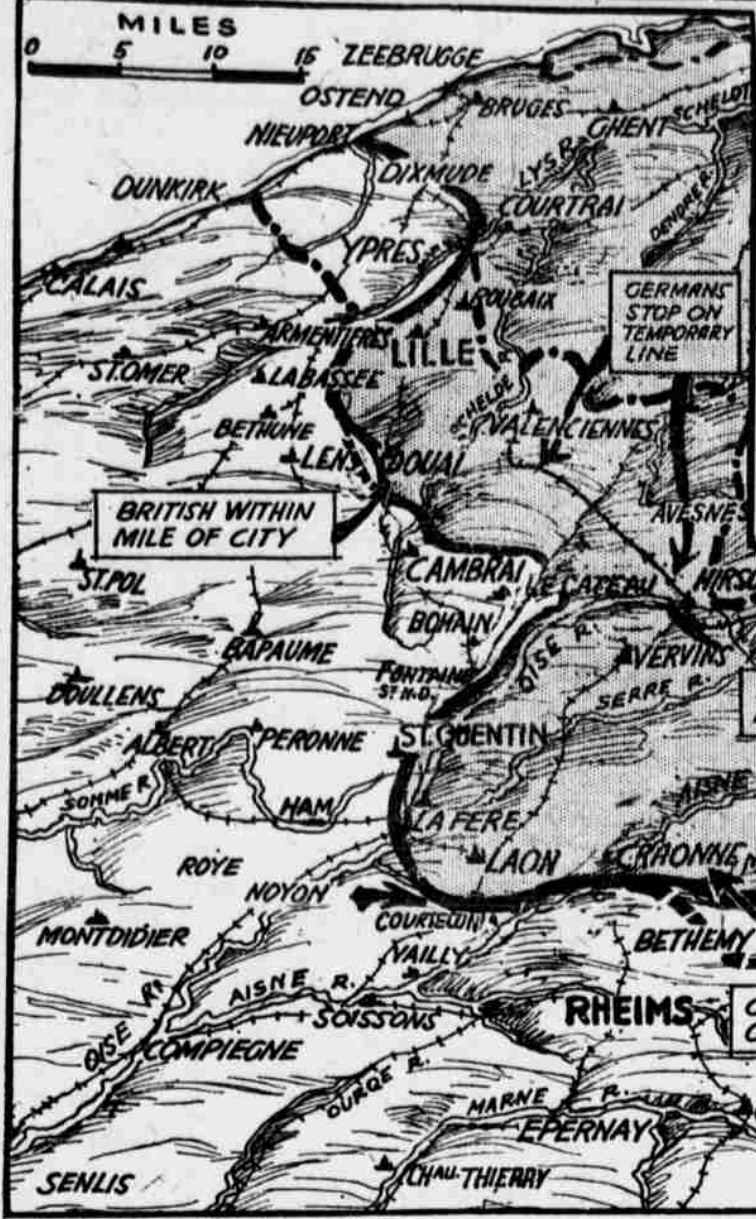
Among those who distinguished themselves in this particular engagement were Major Joseph S. Thompson, Pittsburgh; Capt. Ralph C. Crowe, Harrisburg; and Capt. George Potter of Buffalo. As for the general in command of the brigade, instead of being back somewhere in a dugout, he was erect all through the fighting, going from strong point to strong point and back, always directing the fire. His courage is the talk of the entire division and his ability as a military genius.

The Aire Valley, below the historic city of Varennes, where Louis XIV. was taken when he attempted to escape from France, is a bowl shaped valley gorgeous in color and rich in history. When the Pennsylvanians pushed their way to the lower crest of the ridge looking down into the valley German machine gunners still occupied the edge of the Argonne Forest to the westward. Our officers, including Generals, were sniped at when they came out with their glasses to plan the next phase of the attack.

U. S. SECOND ARMY FORMED.  
It is already in operation. With Bullard in Command.  
By the Associated Press.

WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY NORTHWEST OF VERDUN, Oct. 12.—The American Second Army came into being today and began operations. It is under command of Major Gen. Robert L. Bullard.

## Where the Allies Are Striving to Cut the Valenciennes-Metz Railway



HEAVY blows were struck by the British, French and Americans yesterday in separate but coordinated efforts to reach and cut the railroad which runs from Lille and Valenciennes through Hirson and Mezieres to Metz, upon which the Germans depend for a large part of their transport of men and material to the fighting fronts in France and Belgium, and which will be their main line of retreat.

To protect and keep open this railway the Germans have prepared a temporary line of defence before the railway, to which they are withdrawing the bulk of their men, but the British are said to have reached this defence line already. Near the point of the great salient the Germans are evacuating the famous Chemin des Dames position and must abandon Laon very soon. In the north the British are expected to be in the outskirts of Douai to-day.

On the western end of the battle line the French have captured Vouziers and pushed on beyond it toward the railroad. East of them the Americans also are headed for the same road at a point a little nearer to Metz. Altogether, it appears that the Germans must retire in force in a day or two or run a great risk of a military disaster.

## DISASTER NEAR FOR ARMY OF GERMANY

Continued from First Page.

The Salpêtre at many points, and the Germans are giving up before them. Still further east the French and Americans under Gen. Gouraud, after an advance yesterday of about four miles, in which they captured Machault and Marie, pressed on to-day and took Vouziers, a very important railway point. They occupy the whole line of the Retourne River.

Villages Burned in Retreat.  
Throughout this region the Germans are setting fire to all the villages and are blowing up their ammunition dumps, a sure indication that they are leaving it. Reports of such fires and explosions are brought in by men who have been taken prisoner. They are now being taken to the rear, where they are being burned. The British military circles here are that the combined effect of the Allied advances will be to make the German retreat, if not impossible, so confused and costly that the main mass of the German army must be wrecked in the effort. The evacuation of the St. Gobain mass is likely to be too late to save the German armies from an irreparable breakdown, which would be intensified by the congestion that would follow in the region northwest of Valenciennes, when the German armies attempt to leave the region of St. Quentin, Cambrai and Douai.

## ENEMY TRIES HARD TO STAND ON SELLE

Seeks to Delay Allies Till Douai Pocket Is Evacuated.

By the Associated Press.  
WITH THE BRITISH ARMY IN FRANCE, Oct. 12 (delayed).—The enemy began today to attempt to slow up the Anglo-American advance on the main battle front. All the bridges across the River Selle from Le Cateau southward were blown up and the Germans seem to have been digging in furiously along the line of the high ground some 2,000 to 4,000 yards east of the river, which already has been crossed by the British and Americans at several places. Apparently the Germans intend to make a stand here.

In this locality all of to-day's operations have been devoted to gaining the river crossings and establishing a firm footing on the east bank. There has been sharp machine gun fighting and the Germans, from the high ground of Le Cateau, have poured a heavy fire upon the west bank of the river.

French Gain Along Oise.  
As soon as the Americans and the cavalry entered St. Souplet, south of Le Cateau, they came under a heavy fire from the German gun concentrations. It is reported that the enemy gunners fired their weapons here over open sights. Luckily their aim was not as good as it might have been.

South of here the British and French have driven deeply into the enemy territory and the French now control a long strip of the west bank of the Oise Canal. A British advanced mounted patrol also have reached the canal bank at Longchamps, but they had made too rapid progress and consequently returned.

The British by their drive launched this morning on the northern fringe of the battle area are now operating well on the other side of the Scarpe River and have reached positions less than two miles from the important center of Douai. The troops are driving north-easterly toward this city and at the same time are widening the already wide salient which has been made in the former German positions. There are strong indications that the Germans realize they must get out of the entire Douai salient.

It is not improbable that one of the enemy's principal ideas in trying to

slow up the advance in the area south-east of Le Cateau is for the purpose of protecting his forces in the Douai salient, for every foot gained in this battle area increases the menace to the Germans in the Douai pocket. The British encountered hard opposition in the Scarpe operations, but despite this they have made rapid progress. They have further relieved the pressure east of Arras and are now well to the east of Vitry-en-Artois and Noyelles-sous-Bellonne.

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day evening. We now hold the villages of Hamel, Brebieres and Cunty. Our troops are east of Henin-Lietard and are in the western outskirts of Ennuy.

On the remainder of the front there is nothing to report beyond local fighting at certain points.

FRENCH (DAY).—The French this morning penetrated into Vouziers. They continued their progress along the entire Champagne front. They hold the general line of the Retourne and the road from Pauvres to Vouziers.

GERMAN (NIGHT).—North of Le Cateau and on both banks of the Meuse violent enemy attacks failed.

GERMAN (DAY).—From positions to the west of Douai we retired to the line in the rear. The enemy followed slowly and in the evening occupied the line Vendin-le-Viel, Harnes, Henin-Lietard and east of the Beaumont-Breheres Railway.

Northeast of Cambrai the enemy attacked between the Scheldt River and St. Vaast. The object of the attack, which was launched here on a narrow front by British divisions, was to break through to Valenciennes. The intention was frustrated.

The enemy succeeded only in obtaining a footing at Ivry and on the heights to the east and southeast. Our counter attacks, effectively supported by tanks, brought the enemy's assault here to a standstill. On the rest of this front we repulsed the enemy's attacks and inflicted heavy losses on his dense attacking waves.

Violent partial attacks by British, American and French divisions on both sides of Bohnin were repulsed in front of our positions. There have been reconnoitering engagements on the River Oise.

South of Laon we have evacuated the Chemin des Dames.

In the bend of the River Aisne, between Bery-au-Bac and south of Vouziers, we have occupied new positions. Our movements, which commenced several days ago, remained concealed from the enemy and were carried out according to plan.

In the Champagne the enemy followed us with caution. The victorious issue of the great battle of the Champagne, which the army of Gen. von Elnem with relatively weak forces obtained over an immensely superior strength of the French and American armies in the fortnight's struggle, and

the exhaustion of the enemy, owing to his exceptionally heavy losses, rendered possible the smooth execution of difficult movements.

Partial engagements on both sides of the Aire and violent attacks which the enemy launched during the last few days in the battle sectors on high sides of the Meuse, broke down with heavy losses for the enemy.

Cunel and the Bois des Ormes, temporarily lost, were recaptured by us.

## PERSHING GOES RIGHT ON.

Reports He Is Before St. Juvain.

Which Is in Flames.